

Needs Assessment of Clarence Youth

Report Prepared by Graduate Students and Faculty at the Department of Counseling,
School, and Educational Psychology, University at Buffalo

in collaboration with
Town of Clarence Youth Services
and
Clarence Central School District

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Introduction

Located east of Buffalo, the Town of Clarence and its school district contain 52 square miles of rural and suburban land. With a population estimated at 26,000, Clarence is a suburban community in Erie County that has and continues to experience a significant growth in population. According to the 2000 Census of the US Census Bureau, median household income was \$66,311, compared to a national average of \$41,994. A 2003 Census Bureau statistic indicated that only 76 families with children age 5 to 17 could be classified as being in poverty; in contrast, the Census Bureau estimated that 18,931 families in the Buffalo City School District were in poverty. A recent description of the Clarence school district noted that "there is a profound historical presence in the community and the various stakeholder groups represented in the district share a significant sense of community."

Since 1945, when a Temporary Youth Commission was established, New York State has funded youth programs designed to enhance youth development and prevent juvenile delinquency ("Guide to Developing a Youth Bureau – 2005"). Such programs should be based on an assessment of youth needs and strengths in relation to community resources and services. New York State also recommends that specific outcomes be identified as well as strategies that include community development, advocacy for youth, coordination of existing services, and provision of services and resources to groups that do provide services.

This needs assessment resulted from a collaboration of faculty and graduate students at the University at Buffalo, the Town of Clarence Youth Department, and the Clarence Central School District. Established in 2005, The Town of Clarence Youth

Department provides programs and services to meet the needs of youth and families in the Clarence community (see www.erie.gov/clarence/depts_youth_center.asp). These programs and services include:

- A Youth Volunteer Program allows ages 12-20 to volunteer their time to local agencies and organizations through a variety of service activities. Volunteers work with children, senior citizens, people with disabilities, or help with community events. Activities occur throughout the year and take place after school, evenings, and weekends.
- During the summer young people can participate in a variety of classes and workshops. These educational and skill-building programs include Reading and Math Skills Reinforcement, Kindergarten Readiness, Storytelling, Magic, Drawing, Nutrition, and Field Trips.
- Resource and referral information linking families with community resources are confidential and provided free of charge.
- Special events throughout the year include Middle School Mixers, Holiday Craft Projects, Parent Time Out, Winterfest, Leadership Trainings and Conferences, and Field Trips.

The Youth Advisory Council (YAC), composed of 15 members from the community including at least 4 high school student representatives, is a citizen's advisory council to the Clarence Youth Department. The YAC meets monthly with Youth Department staff to assess youth needs, determine program priorities and involve youth as leaders in the planning and coordination of activities.

The mission of the Clarence Central School District is that each student become a productive member of society and a lifelong learner. The district has earned several recent marks of distinction. These included a designation of the Clarence High School as a school of excellence by the US Department of Education and being named the best school in Western New York by Business First.

Data Collection Procedures for Clarence Youth Services Needs Assessment

This section provides information about how the needs assessment data were gathered and with whom. Participants in this needs assessment included Clarence youth, community leaders, community service providers, faith leaders, business people, educators, parents, and residents. Methods included interviews, focus groups, and paper and web-based surveys. Two surveys were developed for the general community and the business community. More specifically:

- Letters were mailed out to all religious and faith groups in Clarence, inviting their participation in an hour-long meeting to discuss the town's efforts to implement its strategic plan for youth services. The majority of the eight faith leaders who participated in the discussion were employed as youth ministers for middle and high school students.
- UB graduate students interviewed Clarence Town Judges during the summer of 2006 regarding their perceptions of the needs of the town's youth. Both judges see youth 16 years of age and older (younger children are sent to family court).
- With the help of the Clarence Chamber of Commerce, members of the Clarence business community were invited to participate in a web-based survey.
- A general community survey was administered primarily through a website but included paper copies.
- UB graduate students conducted focus groups with Clarence middle and high school students during November, 2006. The Youth Director also ran a focus group with Clarence middle school students in January, 2006.

The community survey administered on the web represented a major effort to obtain reports from Clarence community members. Methods employed to encourage participation in the survey included:

- Articles about the survey in the Bee Newspaper, both Clarence and Amherst
- A flyer reminding people of the survey went home with K-12 students
- Hard copies available at the Clarence Library as well as 4x6 reminders on all computers with online access information
- Hard copies available at Town Hall Clerk's office (tax time) and Youth Department
- Given to PTO President's council
- Table with hard copies at High School open house
- Announcements made at several Town Board Meetings, hard copies available
- Hard copies at Senior Center (during flu shot clinics & after)

- Cub scout leader took hard copies to meeting
- Hard copies given out at Girl Scout Leader's meeting
- Hard copies and announced at SEPTSA (Special Education Parent Teacher Student Association) meeting
- High School PTO meeting
- Town of Clarence Website
- Clarence School District Website
- Sent to all Clarence churches for bulletin
- Announced and hard copies given to Clarence/Amherst MOMS Club (mothers of children birth-5)
- Email correspondence to all school staff, faculty
- Hard copies available at School District office

Finally, the following documents and websites were reviewed in preparation for this report:

- Developmental Assets: A Profile of Your Youth (Search Institute)
- Survey of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Drug Use Among Ninth Grade Students, 2004-2005
- Town of Clarence Youth Department web site (www.erie.gov/clarence/depts_youth_center.asp)
- Results of November 2004 Student Perception Survey that Apply to Student Achievement
- Clarence Parks & Recreation Master Plan 2005
- Guide to Developing a Youth Bureau--2005
- Cicero Youth Advisory Board Report
- Performance Target Outline for Community-School Collaborations
- Hamburg Youth Services Study Final Report
- Evaluating the Youth Development Programs Funded by Westchester County Serving Young Children Ages 5-12
- US Census Bureau

This combination of multiple methods and multiple groups resulted in a comprehensive set of data, provided by a broad range of community members, about perceived needs of Clarence youth.

The resulting data are reported next in 5 major sections:

1. Reports from Clarence Youth

- Focus Groups with High School Students

- Focus Groups with Middle School Students

2. Reports from Clarence Residents

3. Reports from Community Leaders

- Faith-based leaders

- Clarence Town Judges

- Web-based Survey of Business Leaders

4. Developmental Assets Report of Clarence Students

5. Drug & Alcohol Use Survey

1. Reports from Clarence Youth

First Group of Clarence High School Focus Groupss. Thirty-two students from all grade levels (9-12) were recruited by the school's vice-principal during four lunch periods. They were informed that the purpose of the meeting would be to gather their opinions on current youth services and input for future improvements. Students were assured that their anonymity and confidentiality would be protected, and they were encouraged to be honest and forthcoming, since their input would be a valuable aspect of the research project.

All discussions began by establishing a baseline for student knowledge of current youth services. When asked about their overall impression of youth services in Clarence, most students expressed a lack of knowledge about current offerings. A few students mentioned that the town offers sports (specifically summer leagues) and a ski club. Most

students were aware of the youth center, and as a group they identified it as a place to “hang out,” find entertainment (e.g., videogames, paintball), and receive tutoring. Many students expressed reservations about using the current youth center because they lacked transportation. They also described it as boring, small, old, and in need of updates. Some indicated that they might consider using a new facility if certain additions were made; their suggestions included more tutors/teachers for homework help, movie nights, computers, a gym, a pool, a hockey/ice skating rink, a coffee shop, and making it a “comfortable environment” by adding couches and big-screen televisions. Students emphasized that making these services available at no cost would increase their utilization.

However, others said they would still not use such a facility because it is more appropriate for younger children or “kids with problems.” Some said they were unlikely to use the facility because they are too busy with extra-curricular activities, would rather do something at a friend’s house or go to the movies, and prefer to socialize in an unsupervised environment. A couple of students indicated that they attend similar programs at their churches, citing “cool counselors” as an attractive feature. The lack of transportation and the difficulty of identifying a viable, central location for a youth center in Clarence were hindering factors cited by many students. To address the location issue, one student suggested multiple youth centers and another recommended building it with walking distance from the school.

According to these students, Clarence youth encounter a range of problems and concerns. The most commonly mentioned were smoking, drug use, lack of parental supervision, closed-mindedness, and stress. Other problems were also discussed,

including the difficulty of getting around Clarence because they cannot drive and the town does not have a public transportation system, fighting/interpersonal violence, and self-mutilation (i.e., cutting). Perceptions of whether these problems affect certain youth more than others varied. Most students concurred that these problems affect everyone. Some agreed that young people who are not popular or those who fall into the “wrong crowd” experience problems like drug use more acutely.

Students agreed that many of the problems, especially drug-use and vandalism, were attributable to a shortage of engaging activities for young people. Compounding this lack of activities, there was a consensus that many parents spend long hours outside the home, most often at demanding jobs, and are subsequently unavailable to supervise and participate with their children. One ninth-grade female student provided a typical example: her mother works eight to 10-hour days and is “too tired to even talk” when she gets home. According to participants, problematic situations arise among Clarence youth when they lack their parents’ company and accessible, enjoyable activities. Students also discussed the problem of pervasive narrow-mindedness and ignorance in Clarence at length. According to these students, many families have lived in the community for so long that they have become insular. They explained that young people also succumb to this mentality and become disinterested in meeting new and different people. A couple of students also saw this reflected by their high school, citing instances when they were excluded from participating in dances with other local schools. Negative implications associated with a narrow-minded community were mentioned; especially, limited privacy, rumors, stereotyping, and a lack of trustworthy confidantes. Another lengthy discussion addressed stress associated with balancing the high demands of school and

extra-curricular obligations. This was particularly pronounced among ninth and twelfth grade students. Students are driven by pressure from teachers, coaches, and parents to succeed and they report a lack of sufficient “downtime.”

When asked how young people receive help with these concerns, “they don’t” was the typical initial response. Upon further consideration, students named a number of resources, including, friends, parents, siblings, oneself, guidance counselors, teachers, coaches, people from outside the community, local agencies, and mentor groups. Students produced a similar list to the question of how they would find out about resources for young people in Clarence, with the addition of the school library and the Clarence youth center.

Group members implied that students were most likely to rely on themselves or ask friends for help when confronted with serious concerns. Students who reported a positive parental relationship indicated that they might seek help from parents, but others said that parents work too much and would not be available. Teachers were perceived as somewhat helpful, primarily with school-related concerns like too much work or interpersonal problems. There was a mixed response to seeking help from guidance counselors. Younger students reported feeling intimidated by guidance counselors, while older students described guidance as a “friendly atmosphere.” A group of sophomore males indicated that female students were more likely to go to counselors. Moreover, most students expressed concern about discussing serious problems with guidance counselors who cannot guarantee privacy. Overall, guidance counselors were viewed positively in their role as information-providers, but as less reliable for help with serious problems.

In conclusion, students were asked for additional recommendations to improve services for Clarence youth. One student suggested that the town organize trips, like camping, to provide the opportunity for students to get away with friends. A few students expressed concern that they were unaware of the current programs offered by the youth department, and asked that more attention be paid to advertising and raising awareness of these services. Finally, students complained about the lack of transportation and wondered whether a local bus system could be feasibly implemented.

Second Group of Clarence High School Focus Groups. These students were randomly recruited by a school administrator from each of four lunch periods. Focus groups ranged in number from 5 to 13 participants, and each discussion was 30 minutes in length. Thirty seven participants represented grades 9-12 and females were slightly overrepresented in the sample.

Current Services. When asked for their overall impressions of Clarence Youth Services, the typical response was, “I have no clue.” A few students were aware that the town provided sports programs and facilities (i.e., soccer fields, baseball, skate park). Several students talked about Ground Zero (a youth-focused facility located at a church in Clarence). One female student remarked, “Ground Zero used to be fun, but not anymore.” She then specified that mostly younger students attend Ground Zero. When asked whether they would go to events held at Ground Zero if the events were planned by themselves or other youth, they said that they probably would not. To build upon the programs and facilities currently available in the community, the students suggested adding basketball, a lacrosse team, an ice skating rink for hockey and recreational

skating, youth bingo, and dances. One female participant summed up her feelings as follows: “We just want someplace to go!”

Issues of Concern. The participants expressed concern regarding the following issues: transportation (i.e., lack or access to vehicle, distance between destinations in Clarence), homework, relationship problems (i.e., dating, friendships, gossiping, cliques), that there is “nothing fun to do,” the fact that the few activities available (e.g., movies, the mall) cost money, being asked to leave a local coffee shop for loitering, not having a large enough space to gather (e.g., there is not enough room at Buffalo Wild Wings to watch a Sabres game), and the condition of public restrooms at the park. Participants also pointed to mental health concerns such as depression, cutting and suicide. One participant observed that when students experience depression, they feel that they have no one to talk to, and therefore resort to unhealthy coping strategies such as cutting. A female participant indicated that “People feel they can’t be themselves...like they can’t express themselves. They feel alone.” Regarding drug use among students, one male participant estimated that seventy-five percent of Clarence youth have tried using drugs, and fifty percent use drugs regularly.

Sources of Support. Participants indicated that their main source of support is their friends. There was a general sentiment among participants that students don’t feel comfortable talking to guidance counselors because they “don’t really know them” and don’t feel comfortable. Participants agreed that they would be more likely to seek help from younger counselors who might be better able to relate to their concerns, and who might have a better understanding of technology. To address this concern, students suggested that the Town could provide a hotline-type counseling service on the internet

via AOL's Instant Messenger. Other ideas included a telephone hotline staffed by college-aged counselors (available afternoons/evenings), a peer mentorship program, and an internet message board where students could post questions and issues of concern, and receive assistance from "experts" (counselors, etc.) as well as peers. Most participants indicated that they would be most likely to use an Instant Messenger online service. One male student pointed out that this type of program would give young people a resource *and* inform adults of the major issues faced by Clarence youth.

Communication. Participants suggested the following methods of communication regarding services, activities, and events: school announcements, letters home from school, school newspaper, posters/fliers/banners (e.g. at school, movie theaters, mall, library), television bulletins, the Clarence Bee, and word of mouth. They also suggested creating a "Clarence Youth Center Bulletin Board" at the high school. Additionally, they expressed interest in forming a school-based committee or club to work with the town in planning, organizing and publicizing events.

Physical Facility. Participants expressed strong interest in the creation of a space in Clarence for youth to gather. Some students indicated that they wanted it to be open to Clarence students only, while others expressed an interest in opening the facility to youth from other areas as well. One student suggested that combining events/activities with Williamsville would provide an opportunity to meet new people, as well as increasing financial resources. Suggested amenities included: food, a coffee bar, a smoothie bar, video games, a large television, couches, a pool table, a stage, and a stereo. Participants desire "a friendly environment," "laid back rules" (because "That's the whole point."), to be able to "drop in anytime," and supervision by college-aged counselors. One female

participant stated, “We just want to be with our friends in a fun atmosphere.” The students provided many ideas for activities and events, which will be detailed below.

Participants suggested that the facility be called something other than the “Youth Center,” however. They suggested that kids submit ideas and vote on an appealing name for the facility. Participants also seemed excited about the possibility of jobs at the facility or community service hours (e.g., food and drink service, setting up events, etc.). Participants felt that the Main/Transit area would be the most easily accessible. One male participant stated, “It has to be the right atmosphere,” or no one would attend. This sentiment came through as a *major* concern during all of the focus groups. The students made it clear that they would not attend an event or activity that was not viewed as “cool” by their peers. Some of the participants agreed that activities should be affiliated with the school in some way, because events sponsored by the town would be “corny.” The students seemed to be against a youth facility within a larger community center. “We go to get away,” expressed one male participant.

Activities. When asked what types of activities they would enjoy and “definitely attend,” responses varied widely but did not seem incompatible with one another. Many students agreed that there should be “theme nights” at the center, such as coffee night, sports night, game night, etc. Participants made the following specific suggestions: a comedy night, an “open mic” night (where students could sign up to sing, read poetry, etc.), a “coffee night” with a calm atmosphere, “sports night” (e.g., watching a Sabres game with snacks), live bands (student bands, local bands), dances (with no dress-up code), activities that involve those attending (e.g., “Clarence Idol”-type events [like America Idol], “Whose Line is it Anyway?”-type events, “Fear Factor”-type events),

video game competitions, other competitions that award prizes purchased with money from an entrance fee, a barbeque, events at the park/pavilion, after-sports events (after school games), youth-oriented music at the park (in addition to orchestras, etc. that currently perform), ice cream socials, more “Day in the Park”-type events, fairs, sledding at the park, lock-ins (e.g., at Lasertron; participants seemed very excited about this), having a “Challenge Day” where students get to know each other (talk in small groups on the topic of: “If you really knew me, you would know that...,” and opportunities for “hanging out” and “good conversation.” Other ideas included holding raffles, charity functions, charity walk/run, and asking for community donations for events, activities, and to furnish the center. Several students expressed an interest in meeting new people. One male participant stated, “I’d want to go to talk to people that I don’t usually get to talk to.” A few participants suggested a “youth center bus” to help with transportation to events.

Focus Groups with Clarence Middle School Students. This group of 38 students was randomly recruited by a school administrator from four study halls. Focus groups ranged in number from 5 to 15 participants, and each discussion was 20 to 30 minutes in length. Thirty eight participants represented grades 6-8, and slightly more males participated.

Issues of Concern. Participants noted the following concerns among their middle school peers: anger management, peer pressure, rumors, “backstabbing,” fighting, graffiti, cutting (self-harm), cliques, and academics. Students also indicated that there is a group of students referred to as the “gothic kids” who “do their own thing” and are ostracized by the majority of their peers.

Sources of Support. Participants indicated that their main sources of support are their friends and parents. Some students stated that they do sometimes go to their guidance counselors for help, while others reported never having done so. In regards to seeking assistance from guidance counselors, one student admitted that “Sometimes it can be weird.”

When asked for their thoughts about the “Instant Messenger counseling” service that seemed popular among high school participants, the middle school students stated that they would be more likely to use that type of support than face-to-face counseling. Participants also suggested a “Homework Hotline” service that would provide support for students struggling with a particular homework assignment.

Communication. To facilitate communication regarding services, activities, and events, participants suggested school announcements and flyers, and the morning school news. One male participant suggested that the Clarence Middle School Student Counsel could serve as a link between the middle school students and the town youth department. This idea sparked discussion and the students expressed their desire to participate in the planning of town-sponsored activities and events. However, participants indicated that a separate committee would not make sense, because the same students who participate in student counsel would volunteer to participate in a separate youth department committee.

Physical Facility. Participants expressed variable interest in a space for youth to gather. Some were quite enthusiastic about the idea, while others were more interested in securing more sports fields, an indoor sporting facility, and a fitness center. Suggestions for a youth space included comfortable seating, a food court, video games, different rooms for different types of activities (e.g., “hang out” room, video game room, billiard

room, dance studio, computer lab, etc.), and a white board or chalk board for students to write messages. One male participant suggested making a safe bike path around the town hall, and several other male participants expressed interest in a skate park. Most participants agreed that they really would like “a place to hang out.”

Activities. When asked what types of activities they would enjoy and *definitely attend*, participants offered the following suggestions: paintball, Lasertron, rock wall climbing, bowling, bands/concerts, flag football, basketball, ice hockey, floor hockey, “indoor sports,” a trip to a pool/waterslide (e.g. in Tonawanda), a trip to Canada, a trip to the zoo, a trip to Darien Lake, arts and crafts activities (one female participant seemed very excited about a Build-A-Bear –type activity), video game competitions/tournaments, billiards, Bills games and Sabres games (either gathering to watch on TV, or attending as a group), hiring a DJ, community service activities, a trip to an arcade, and taking a trip to a roller rink/ ice skating rink. Several students expressed interest in an organized “after school program” with homework help and recreational activities. One female participant suggested having “activity nights,” including music, food and dancing, and another expressed interest in a “movie night” for youth to get together and enjoy a film. One male participant suggested holding fund raisers for group outings and activities, and the other students in the group seemed enthusiastic about the idea.

Focus Group with Middle School Students. The Clarence Youth Director conducted a focus group with Clarence middle school students (Grades 6-8) in January, 2006. Following are the questions posed and a list of responses:

What do you do after school 3:30-6:00 p.m.?, after 6:00 p.m.?

- go to Middle School pool (3:30-5:30) for swim team

- swim club (6:30)
- go home, play basketball, running
- homework
- LC (learning center) at Middle School for homework help
- Hockey practice
- Play with friends
- Wrestling team then home for dinner, homework, bed
- Sports – soccer, basketball, baseball
- Play guitar at home
- Play with friends in neighborhood
- Homework, TV
- Computer

Do you go home to an empty house after school, how long are you alone?

- 15-30 minutes at home by self
- 30-60 minutes
- 15-20 minutes
- 4:00-6:00 at home alone 3 or 4 times/week

What do you do on the weekends – Friday, Saturday, Sunday?

- Home with family
- Walk dog
- Activity night @ Middle School
- On phone with friends
- In neighborhood with friends
- Play video games
- Computer
- Family activities – Sundays
- Out to eat with family
- Church/religion – Sundays
- Cyberjocks – computer place
- Homework
- Sports
- Movies
- Sleepover at friends
- Indoor field hockey (EPIC center)
- Swim meets

If we had a large, empty building, what would it have?

- Swimming pool
- Music

- Game room – Game systems (PS2, etc.)
- Pinball
- Sports
- Games
- Softball diamond
- Soccer field
- Batting cages
- Table tennis
- Clarence Youth Center (“like it was a year ago”)
- Dancing
- Laser tag
- DJ
- Dance floor
- Like Middle School Activity Night + outdoor activities
- Quiet, study place
- Waterslides
- Rec. Room
- Movie Theatre

What is an ideal place to “hang out”?

- Bowling alley
- Friend’s basement
- Park
- Clarence YC
- Movies
- Games, sports, movies
- Dave & Buster’s
- End of driveway

What pressures do you feel from:

Peers?:

- Hanging out
- Pressure to do things parents don’t approve of
- Relationships

Parents/Family?:

- To do sports
- Keep up school work, grades
- Pushing to do better in sports
- Homework

School personnel?:

- Embarrassment (embarrass them in class)
- Homework assignments – too much, too hard

What stresses you?

- Sports
- Homework – Conflict of time

What are you involved in?

- School Clubs & Activities
- Music lessons
- Sports

2. Reports from Clarence Residents

A total of 480 individuals completed the general survey regarding the Town's youth services. Four hundred twenty eight persons completed a web version and 52 completed a paper version. Overall, about 2% of the Town's population provided information via the survey. While we have no information about whether this 2% is representative of the Town as a whole, this is a relatively high participation rate for a community survey.

Survey participants were primarily middle-aged (86% reported their age as between 31 and 50), female (85%), and Caucasian (96%). About half (44%) had lived in Clarence for 11 or more years and the remaining survey participants had lived in the Town for less than 11 years. Eighty-two percent of participants reported that their child or children had participated in at least one program offered in Clarence. These data suggest that most of the survey respondents were parents of Clarence youth.

The first major set of survey questions asked about residents' awareness, perceptions, and satisfaction of Clarence youth services. Combining the response categories "Agree" and "Strongly Agree" into one agreement category, results indicated that:

- 69% of residents agreed they would recommend Clarence youth programs and activities to other residents.
- 66% reported that they were aware of the different youth services and programs offered in Clarence.
- 66% reported that programs and activities are conveniently located.
- 57% agreed that transportation to and from youth activities is manageable.
- 56% indicated that current programs and activities are appealing to the Town's youth.
- 54% reported seeing positive changes in youth who participate in activities.
- 51% reported that youth in their neighborhoods participate in Clarence youth activities.
- 49% reported satisfaction with the variety of youth services and programs offered in Clarence.
- 41% reported being aware of the different family services and programs offered in Clarence.

The next survey question asked participants to rate the importance of 5 factors when considering youth programs. Persons ranked the following factors as "very important" or "important:"

- 97%, the child's interest in the youth program or activity.
- 87%, time of day of the program.
- 71%, the activity's cost.
- 71%, the duration of the program.
- 34%, the location of the program.

For the 84 participants who also checked "Other" for this question, the list below displays a sample of their responses. These ranged from recommendations regarding physical facilities (skating/hockey rink, a central meeting place for youth) to suggestions about the importance of the types of adults who coach and lead youth programs:

- The attitude/philosophy of the leader/coach is extremely important to keep the parents AND children interested!!
- I would like to see a hockey rink in Clarence
- Correlation between the program and the child's life learning experiences (ie. learning about money, manners and respect for others class)
- Ice skating facility would be ideal
- Age factor, my child is only in third grade so he could not participate in many of the activities that he wanted to do because they were only offered to fourth grade and up. He will be 9 years old in December so he is one of the older, smarter, bigger, and more mature kids in his grade.
- Competitiveness level / winning-losing importance skill levels of teams are matched with players of similar abilities. Better players compete w/ similar level competition; Lesser talented players compete w/ similar type player abilities.
- Are they being supervised/taught by responsible, mature adults?
- the quality and training of the instructors, the moral and ethical values of the program in training my children to be productive members of society
- Informing the parents of the services, to this date I am unaware of where and when
- We need a meeting place, and we need something the whole family can participate in.
- The staff/parent volunteer leaders/coaches keep things in perspective and treat participants fairly. E.g., there is no need to have a baseball draft, in which coaches (not all, but many) are over jealous, often incredulous, and seemingly in it for their own vicarious needs for competition. This program could learn from the structure of the soccer program and also from the girls softball program. Programming should realize that children do NOT need to prepare at age 7 for the olympics or pro sports. Please limit quantity of practices, length of season, etc. to a reasonable level. Would like to see additional opportunities for family-centered activities; parents and kids can participate together. Would like to see an indoor complex for fitness, sports, and recreation and that youth and adults can use alike.
- Keeping younger siblings busy during an activity for participating child. ie. Clarence Soccer fields would be a perfect place to erect playground facilities. For those children too young to play soccer, they could be entertained during a game by swinging on swings and playing on slides. Even a sandbox would be a great help.

Several questions asked residents about their perceptions of the needs of youths and what kinds of activities might be offered. First, residents were asked if there was a need for a youth-centered community facility. Seventy-four percent said yes. Survey residents were also presented with a list of 10 possible needs and a 1 to 10 scale ranging from 1 (least important) to 10 (most important). Residents ranked the following items as 6 or above:

- 62%, Recreation
- 60%, Sports
- 46%, Arts
- 46%, Family-oriented activities
- 46%, Homework assistance and tutoring
- 45%, Counseling
- 36%, Social Services and Family Services
- 32%, After school care
- 31%, Parenting information and support
- 21%, Before-school care

Residents also indicated what types of activities and services they would like to see in such a community youth facility. The resulting choices were:

- 73%, General recreation
- 67%, Arts such as music, theatre, dance
- 66%, Education and tutoring
- 59%, Arts and crafts
- 55%, Game room with such activities as foosball and ping pong
- 54%, Computer technology
- 40%, Counseling
- 38%, Social services and family support

Finally, 90 individuals provided general comments and suggestions. Appendix A contains all 90 comments from the web survey and 15 comments from individuals who completed a paper copy of the survey. A sample of these final comments and suggestions (with editing for spelling) follows:

- Two things I suggest 1. A support group for angry teenage boys to give them alternative ways to cope with anger. 2. I drive my son to the Amherst Youth Center and it was packed. They had local battle of the Bands and it drew a lot of kids. It cost \$2 to get in. Try something like that to get youth interested in the youth center.
- Computer and social services should be left up to families. Counseling could help those who have little family support.
- I would feel more comfortable sending my children to the facility if I knew there would be responsible older adults to supervise. Are you considering paid positions or volunteers to work at the center? Would computer use/internet use be strictly monitored? How secure would the building be? Monitors?
- I feel we need better lines of communication in place, when informing the public about youth sports available in the community!
- Just want to applaud all of the volunteers who manage and coach the existing Baseball and football programs in Clarence. We see a real dedication to teaching the kids about discipline, good sportsmanship foundational techniques that I have no doubt will stick with them the rest of their lives. If you intend to develop future programs, I suggest you look at those who are already heading up Bulldogs football and the TCBA!
- I have been reading the community handouts that my children bring home and am completely disappointed with myself that I haven't taken more advantage of the great activities planned. This survey has opened my eyes to the benefits of the youth organization and I will make an effort to participate.
- I would like to see some rec or sports programs that are for fun and don't drain our bank accounts, perhaps a few hours at night or on a Saturday. I also would like to comment on the very dangerous conditions our kids face when attending a game or practice at Sunset Park. We are forced to park on Wehrle and cross that very busy street which is especially terrifying when it is after 5pm and dark. That park needs more parking before someone is killed and the town gets a hefty lawsuit! My kids have been using that field for 16 years and there has never been any work done to make the parking situation safer. Please think about this liability and potential for great harm or death to 1 or more of your citizens.
- I would love to see a Boys/Girls club in this community. A place where kids can go and shoot hoops, play games talk and be able to be active.
- Leave Tutoring and computers to the schools. Perhaps allow computer access at the Library- that's it. Leave counseling to the professionals and courts. Sunset needs better parking, someone is going to get killed crossing Wehrle to get to football practice or a game. The fields desperately need better drainage to avoid

looking like a pond. Bike path is a great resource, but a lot of thought needs to be put into safety (clear a wide area of all trees/brush on both sides, security cameras, etc.)

- I would like more visibility of the programs and their specifics. It should be more visible to the public via mailings, advertisements, etc...
- The Center should house a resource library with helpful books and pamphlets on everything from drug and alcohol use to ADHD and OCD to health concerns and parenting issues.
- Check out Amherst Youth Services and the Family Room. It is a program for children and parents available three days/week offering age appropriate play activities for young children and their peers/family. It is affordable, \$140 per year and visits are endless. Also offer field trips for minimal cost. Much needed in Clarence. They serve about 250 families/year and needs are variable.
- Kids play outside in nice weather. There is a significant need for indoor activity during the cold and winter months. An ice rink is a strong need in this community. Families would be willing to pay for admittance, similar to the town pool. hot cocoa and snacks could also be sold for profit. My family would frequent an ice rink from September to April.
- My children are 5 and 9. We are happy with their activities. The middle school and high school kids in the neighborhood need some kind of hang out though. They want to feel some independence and freedom but their parents don't want them walking the streets and hanging out at the Coffee House. I have read the schedule for the kids Center and it seems really fun. I wonder why the older kids I know don't participate? I have never been to the Center. Is it modern and clean with fun decorating that makes kids want to be there? Does the Center need some cool marketing, some kind of "this is the place to be" excitement? To really serve the teens and preteens of the community this Center has to offer irresistible activities. Maybe sports or games or academic challenges or contests, all request dances, local celebrities signing autographs or speaking, self improvement workshops or classes, fashion shows where they are the models, crafting or music classes (maybe taught by kids themselves) or groups who get together to do their craft or make music just for fun without instruction. Maybe an open mike night for music, comedy, poetry reading, dancing- like a talent show. Maybe hockey fans night. That might appeal to kids who play the sport and also to fans of the school and local teams and Sabres fans too. Etc. All of these things need to be promoted as very cool things to do. Events that are not to be missed. They need to happen in the early evening, perhaps 6:00-8:00 or 7:00-10:00. Student representatives from the middle and high schools could be used to hang posters and promote the events at the schools. Maybe even a web site with info and photos of the events. I think parents would like to drop off their children there and let them have supervised yet independent fun. The kids just have to want to go.

Also, I think the town needs a cool modern YMCA with an indoor pool. We also need a public indoor ice skating rink. We should definitely have a town outdoor ice skating rink with lights for night skating. It should have a snack bar and tables and music. There should be a town Holiday tree lighting ceremony with caroling. There is nothing so heart warming that gives a town a feeling of togetherness and community in the winter like outdoor evening skating and other activities with refreshments and music. It can be so much fun and make such wonderful memories. These places would offer evening activities that get the kids moving with healthy exercise and fresh air. It would be great to add a place in Clarence, especially in the winter, that would be a popular defined center, a heart, of the town where everyone would like to go.

- I live near Transit and County road and there is very little access to any of the Clarence parks, recreation areas, or the library. I hope a future facility will not be built, since it would likely be inaccessible to me, although my taxes would go up to finance it. Clarence should adopt user fees for its parks and recreation facilities, and base taxes for them on whether one lives within a certain radius of the parks (i.e. the closer one lives, the more they pay). I also find the signs at the parks restricting use to town residents a little silly. How is that even enforced? After all, we have no police protection in Clarence and the 1 or 2 county sheriffs cars that come through the town a week are not going to bother with this.
- The middle and high school age youth in Clarence are under served. They are in desperate need of a facility to gather where they are supervised and can engage in constructive activities. A game room (ping pong, pool, foosball, etc.) and a gym would be great! There is a stigma attached to the current Clarence Youth Center, Inc. that prevents many other Clarence Youth from going there. Some feel that under the current model for that Youth Center, the kids are there to be "babysat".
- Having a youth center has been a part of this community for over 30 years. Having a safe place for the kids to gather safely together to interact and talk and have a little unrestricted time is vital for their growth. There was a time when the kids in this town could go to a park or the mall or the library or someone's home to hang out. In today's world, there is a lot to consider; for example, busy roadways and congested traffic - especially for working parents - when we get home from commuting to and from work, the last thing we need is to drive all over the place, we need a set place for them to meet. Somewhere we can be sure there are no strangers lurking around with intent to bother them. At the mall, they always need money and also, it's not healthy for kids to hang out there. The library has a quiet and studious atmosphere, although they do have a meeting room area for special events. The kids do enjoys games, such as foosball, air hockey and billiard games, also computer games. They do enjoy listening to music or watching movies on TV. Primarily, they should have a place that is as familiar and safe as their own homes - like a second home.

- Just a few ideas... There could be some wonderful opportunities for children and families of all ages if a recreational facility was available. •It could be a great place for teenagers to "hang out" in a supervised manner. This could be a place to play games, talk, or listen to music. •In addition, the facility could be a place where asset building activities are possible. It would be neat to provide a place supported by the community where young adults and younger children could get together with friends and/or family to do activities that could help out others who are less fortunate within and beyond our township. •The facility could provide before/after school care. After school care could certainly provide for tutoring or homework help. •It would be a nice place for younger children to get together and play after school (i.e. doing crafts, etc). •It may provide a nice place for Moms to come together with toddlers during the school day. This could be well equipped with toddler toys and climbing apparatus. •I am not certain of the degree of counseling, parenting, family support needed in our community, but that sounds super for those who need it. •It may be nice to have family nights for the community to come together and get to know their neighbors. I hope that helps. Thank you for taking time to ask the community about such an incredible opportunity.
- I'm perfectly happy with what I get now, but if it wouldn't affect tax monies significantly (meaning I DON'T want to pay more taxes for the service or activity), I wouldn't mind more arts stuff in the community. I would be willing to pay for it out of pocket, i.e. like a community education class. Also, I would like to see the town get rid of the Youth center. I really don't think Clarence needs it and I liked what the previous director said that it should be shut down. I waste of taxpayers' money.
- Need better advertising of the programs available. Crafts should be free--perhaps "sell advertising space" to local businesses to cover costs of crafts.
- Kids need to be kept busy--doesn't have to be an organized team but someplace to shoot hoops, play ping pong, etc. My kids enjoy the summer programs more than anything. Need a bigger facility than new site. Thank you for the programs you provide.
- Even if we were in school, we would be notified of Williamsville activities many of which we cannot participate in for free since we are in the Town of Clarence.
- Sports such as a girls' ice hockey team. I know that might be realistic, though.
- Community center with variety of activity for all ages is a great idea. In my former community we had a YMCA and a "park district" center very close. We have fond memories of activities such as Daddy-Daughter Date Nite and "indoor gym" notes for parents and preschoolers. Make sure you are able to add on to a center as funds and interests grow! "Build it and they will come..."

- Need a program based solely on needs!
- I'm 84 years old, but wish everything would have been available long ago. My children are now 60 & 62.
- I think parents should have to be involved and give time to any youth activities. Volunteer to all activities.
- Since I am a Senior Citizen and have never had children when living in Clarence-- I do not know too much about Youth Services. I do know our church is very interested and doing a good job of having activities for the youth of the community--not just for our Church at Zion E. Lutheran --Pastor (X) and Pastor (X) are very interested and will help all youth of our community.
- We need more opportunities for youth so that they have a positive experience and hopefully discourage negative behaviors (vandalism, drug addiction, school failure). Parents need education and support about problems with youth in our community. I think parents can be in denial or not aware of the fact (rather than rumors) about real problems. Also they need to know where to turn for help.
- Create a Drug Corp. to work in cooperation with home, school, and the police department as the town of Amherst has.
- There are many special needs kids in Clarence. Is there a way to get them to socialize with "typical" kids, i.e., crafts, bowling, dances, party etc. My sons are involved in sports and are very social.
- We attend the Clarence Youth Center that is currently offered on Main Street. I am sure since I mentioned that, I will not be eligible for the basket. I really don't care about that. I just don't understand why [the Youth Director] needs a Program Director to help her out, when there is minimal activities going on. That is a waste of our tax money. Also, to have the activities centered around 12-20 year olds is ridiculous, especially in light of the fact that when most children turn 16, they usually take on a part-time job, plus are busy with after school activities. This program should be centered around children from ages 8 to 16. Since neither of my children's ages range from 12-20, I will not utilize any town-based youth center and will only support the ORIGINAL YOUTH CENTER, who does a wonderful job.
- I graduated from Clarence High School in '73. The "Teen Center" was at the Main Park and a great gathering spot for all of us. There were dances on the tennis courts in the summer and (X) sponsored Dances in the winter in the gym at Nativity School. Kids need to be able to socialize in a chaperoned environment in their early teen years. We don't have anything now -- just the High School activities. The community really needs to get behind this -

- As a relatively new parent with my first child in Kindergarten, I have stumbled upon some youth activities/opportunities through the Community Education program. It is frustrating, however, that Williamsville seems to be first in announcing their options, along with offering more programs, times, dates and variety, and I have taken advantage of more of their programs than those offered by Clarence. I think that the concept of a Community Center is a positive step that would meet with much support. Anything that offers our children a structured, yet relaxed environment with options aside from watching T.V. and playing video games and running with the wrong crowd would be excellent. My priorities as a new parent in the district center around: 1-SAFETY 2-Learning 3-Developing sound relationships and making right choices 4-Being a part of community and larger "family" 5-Having positive role models for my children 6-Exposure to unique life experiences If I can be of assistance to offer ideas, or other, I am interested. Time is limited due to a new baby (1 of 3) and full-time work schedule.
- My children have never been involved in the youth center, but I know there is a strong need in the community for a center such as this. There are many kids, too many in fact, left on their own. They need a safe, secure place where they can visit for a variety of needs/services. It's a sad fact that there are many families in Clarence, both rich and poor, who neglect their children -- for whatever reasons.

3. Reports from Community Leaders

Faith-based leaders. On June 27, 2006, researchers from the University at Buffalo led a focus group to determine the needs of Clarence youth from the perspective of the town's faith communities. Letters were mailed out to all religious and faith groups in Clarence, inviting their participation in an hour-long meeting to discuss the town's efforts to implement its strategic plan for youth services. The majority of the eight faith leaders who participated in the discussion were employed as youth ministers for middle and high school students. One member was a college student intern at his church.

The discussion began with an inquiry about the participants' knowledge of current youth services offered by the town. In response to the question, one participant replied "what *are* they?" - a sentiment echoed by the other group members. Since their initial knowledge was limited, the Youth Director for the Town of Clarence informed the group

of the services and activities offered by the town. When asked what activities or opportunities could improve these current offerings, participants suggested building a physical facility for youth programs (similar to the Pepsi Center, located in Amherst, NY), offering more recreational activities for middle school students, the training and utilization of youth leaders and mentors, arts and/or drama programming, and education or counseling about illegal drug use for youth and families. Participants also expressed concern that certain obstacles might hinder the implementation of some of these services, including the particular geography of Clarence (it is more spread out than other local suburbs) and transportation to/from activities. The need for greater visibility of the Youth Bureau was also noted.

Clarence offers high quality sports programs, according to participants. However, many of the faith leaders agreed that young people in Clarence are pressured by their parents to be involved in sports, despite little or no personal desire to do so. One participant remarked that “their hearts aren’t in it.” The group recognized a need to create activities and events in which youth really *want* to participate. To spark youth interest, one participant suggested creating programs that stand out from those typically offered by the schools. It was also noted that youth need to be taught to “think outside of themselves,” and to feel that they are having an impact on their community.

Participants offered a resounding “yes” to the question of whether there should be a physical facility for youth in Clarence, although most expressed concern about financing such a large-scale project. Several funding options were mentioned, including usage fees and taxes. Participants provided the following recommendations for such a facility, should it be built: a central location, a hockey/roller rink, a YMCA-type

atmosphere, and resources for after-school programming (computers, tutors, etc.). Concerns regarding the limited utilization of the town's previous youth facility were expressed. Participants emphasized that youth programs should be established prior to construction of a new building to ensure that the facility will be successful. Others suggested that similar services could be provided by making use of facilities that already exist in the town, for example, the Ground Zero Café at the Eastern Hills Wesleyan Church. There was overwhelming support for communication and collaboration among various interest parties, particularly in the planning stages of development.

Several issues of concern for the community regarding young people in Clarence were discussed. Participants believed that certain groups of youth, especially those who “don’t belong to anything” (like a sports team), and those from less affluent families are particularly vulnerable. Due to many families’ busy schedules, some parents prefer not to send their children to youth-only activities, which can further limit their family-time together. Some participants suggested that this issue might be resolved by offering family activities for youth and parents to participate in together. The unique demographic of Clarence, characterized by a high percentage of affluent families in which both parents work, presents young people with the potentially risky combination of access to money and a large amount of unsupervised free time. Several participants expressed concern about middle-schoolers engaging in sexual acts on school buses. Rumors of such incidents have reached the faith leaders in addition to direct reports from youth.

Group members perceived that many youth in Clarence lack a feeling of belonging, and that this is a source of considerable difficulty. Young people are often scheduled full with activities, but lack a special adult or close-knit peer group to provide

support and belongingness. To address this concern, it was suggested that the town improve upon programs that are already being offered. For example, sports teams in Clarence could be improved by providing mentorship training to team coaches. Further, support and belongingness could be fostered by small support groups (five students with one teacher) in the middle school. One participant suggested that the introduction of a program such as Big Brother/Big Sister, which is not currently offered in Clarence, might also assist with this problem.

The need for adult leadership was also discussed at some length. One group member shared the observation that “Clarence youth don’t feel valued by their town.” Participants concurred that the relationships built among youth and adults through shared participation in activities and organizations can be more important than the activities themselves. One participant suggested that even students who are involved in activities, such as sports teams, may suffer from problems due to a lack of positive mentoring and leadership, particularly in the face of strong, negative peer influences. Again, group members remarked on the significant number of students with two working parents, which may contribute to compromised adult relationships and a feeling of disconnectedness.

When families require support services, faith leaders indicated that there can be resistance to help-seeking, and families must be persuaded to obtain services. Several sources of this resistance were suggested, including the stigma attached to receiving such services and the desire of families in Clarence to maintain self-sufficiency and address problems on their own. An additional barrier to obtaining services lies in their availability; once families agree to seek services, they are frequently faced with a long

waiting list. The faith leaders also shared that a troubling paradox arises when family support services are needed: families in Clarence often struggle between the desire to obtain services close by and the need for anonymity, which cannot be guaranteed in a small community such as Clarence.

Participants concurred that youth currently receive help with their problems by finding a sense of belonging in one way or another. However, most faith leaders were concerned that students may not do this in a manner that “promotes their well-being,” in the words of one participant. Some youth invoke positive coping strategies, such as seeking help from their faith community or at school. Group members agreed that the local schools do a good job of addressing and responding to concerns when they arise, as well as providing education aimed at prevention and remediation of problems. However, concerns were expressed regarding the students’ application of this learned information as well as follow-up and reinforcement at home.

To assess modes of communication and the sharing of information regarding resources for young people in Clarence, participants were asked to share the ways they find out about such resources. It was noted that families rarely seek help until it is too late. Several participants emphasized that congregations must be aware of the needs of families in Clarence and offer help when required. Leaders of one church indicated that they maintain a website through which they communicate with members. In addition, youth often bring friends along to events and activities and pass announcements to others through word-of-mouth communication. The schools were also identified as a major means of communication (e.g., newsletters, announcements, etc.). Participants expressed

a desire to work with the schools in allowing pastors and parents to visit for lunches with students to build positive relationships between adults and youth.

As reflected in the opening question of the discussion, participants indicated a lack of awareness of the services offered by other providers in Clarence. The group seemed eager to generate ways in which community resources could be integrated to improve and streamline youth services. Significant discussion was devoted to pooling the resources of, and improving communication among service providers, particularly religious/faith communities, school, and the community.

Finally, participants were invited to share any other recommendations for youth programs and activities in Clarence. Collaboration and communication among the town, schools, and faith communities were emphasized (as opposed to a “silo effect” in which these function as isolated entities). Further, the possibility of collaboration with UB students was raised (e.g., tutoring or counseling to meet training requirements or based on interest). One participant suggested a *Clarence Bee* article to inform the community of the discussions taking place between the town, schools and faith communities. It was noted that such an article may attract additional resources, contacts, etc. from the community. Participants also recommended that collaborative meetings similar to the current focus group be held at other churches in the future to increase participation from the various faith communities in Clarence.

Clarence Town Judges. UB interviewers spoke with 2 Clarence Town Judges during the summer of 2006 regarding their perceptions of the needs of the town's youth. Both judges see youth 16 years of age and older (younger children are sent to family court). They will be referred to below as Judge A and Judge B.

When asked to share his overall impressions of youth services in Clarence, Judge A indicated that such services are “largely non-existent” but that those services that do exist focus on a limited portion of Clarence youth (young children). Judge A was aware of the town’s summer recreation program, sports and school activities, but no other services. When asked for his thoughts about opportunities that could build upon what is currently available, Judge A suggested that the town might come up with more ways to deal with at-risk youth. For example, the current punishment for minor violations (a \$50 fine) is insignificant to most youth offenders in Clarence. Judge A suggested that instead, the town might organize community service opportunities for minor violations.

On the subject of the major issues of concern for the community regarding young people in Clarence, Judge A indicated that difficulties between parents and their children are often at the root of problems. Specifically, parents’ loss of control over their children’s behavior and parents bringing charges against their children as a result of violence were noted. In addition, Judge A felt that parents frequently leaving children home alone creates “too much free time” and sometimes leads to negative behaviors. Other potential causes of negative behavior included boredom, peer pressure, hip hop lyrics and “kids who haven’t found a place.” Marijuana use was indicated as an issue of concern, although Judge A expressed his belief that use in Clarence is less than in other places. Judge A stated that he has not noticed any particular groups of youth with these problems, but that he has seen a pattern of alcoholism in parents of the youth he works with. He indicated that he sometimes sees youth more than once, but just as often does not (i.e., youth who get into trouble do not necessarily become repeat offenders).

When asked how youth in Clarence currently receive help with these concerns, he mentioned school-based support, churches, and counseling that focuses on behavior modification. He emphasized the need for the young person and his or her family to have a desire to “make it work” in order for counseling to be effective. Judge A believed that residents of Clarence are not aware of the available services, and suggested sending information home from school as one way to inform the community. He also mentioned Catholic Charities and Mid-Erie Mental Health Services as sources of information about resources for youth.

Concerning a physical facility for youth in Clarence, Judge A felt that it would be “difficult to make something like that work” because the town is too spread out, making it difficult or impossible for young people to get to the facility. Instead, Judge A expressed his belief that the town should devote its funds to services for the whole town (rather than to a physical facility). His additional recommendations for the town’s youth department included “finding something to appeal to alienated kids” and building upon adult mentorship programs. While he felt that existing mentorship programs do make a difference in the lives of individual youth, he pointed to liability issues and low participation from members of the mentorship program currently run by the Rotary Club (only 6-12 members regularly participate).

Judge A emphasized that issues currently faced by youth go beyond the town and are really family-level issues. He stated that “kids are underserved by their parents” when parents are concerned with getting ahead (financially) or abuse alcohol. He also expressed feeling as though he is “working in a vacuum”; that there are no other options for young people who get into trouble but to arrive in his courtroom. He further

explained his view that when young people come to him, they arrive at a “tipping point” – they will either turn things around and stop engaging in negative behaviors or continue to get into trouble. Judge A would like more support from the town to help redirect youth who arrive at this point toward more positive behaviors. To start, he requested information about the town’s Youth Volunteer Program as an option for some of the youth he works with. He would also like to receive a copy of this program evaluation report when it is completed.

Judge B was very enthusiastic about the quality and scope of Clarence’s youth services. He was particularly complimentary of the sports teams and athletic activities. Among the young people Judge B encounters in the courts, those who are involved with sports are “more respectful of authority.” The positive effects of athletic participation are extensive, from the opportunity to make friends to the structure and discipline it provides. Based on his experience as a coach for his son’s soccer and baseball teams, he reported that coaches of town sports teams receive training on “how to be with kids,” which he personally found very helpful. He also recalled that the soccer fields and baseball diamonds provided and maintained by the town were excellent. Other activities or opportunities of which he was aware included the swimming pool, concerts and music programs (provided by the schools), and a basketball program in the summer. In addition to these organized activities that are currently being offered, Judge B believes that young people could benefit from a social gathering place for more informal activities and events. A separate physical facility would suit this purpose, but he emphasized that it does not have to be “a palace.” He also noted that because of Clarence’s geography, location and transportation might complicate the building of such a facility. He was

explicit in his belief that after-school care should not be provided by the town, but should be arranged and financed by individual families, especially those who are financially able.

Judge B does not view the problems affecting Clarence's youth as specific to the town, but instead as similar to problems children face around the country. He believes that young people are exposed to negative influences, most often from the media, very early in their lives. Issues of particular concern in Clarence are underage drinking, drinking and driving, substance abuse, burglaries, and a general lack of respect for authority. Drinking and driving affect Clarence because of its distinct characteristics: A convergence of two-parent working households, excess money, and a lack of public transportation means that many young people are supplied with cars during their high school years. This combined with the pressures on youth to experiment with alcohol and drugs results in high numbers of drunk-driving incidents. Judge B also noted that he has seen a handful of cases in which young people leave home at 16, calling themselves "emancipated" (though they are not legally emancipated). He speculated as to whether this is/will become a trend in the town. In general, many of these problems are made worse by the lack of a police force in Clarence, according to Judge B.

Judge B believes that youth who are not involved in organized activities, or "loners," are more vulnerable to the problems described above. Participation in activities provides appropriate discipline, as well as opportunities for interactions with peers and important adults in the youth's life (e.g., parents, coaches). In the event that a young person in Clarence encounters a serious problem, Judge B reports that they are most likely to receive help through social service agencies. In his judicial practice, he makes

frequent referrals to drug courts in the nearby communities of Amherst and Buffalo for individuals with drug-related problems. He also stated that if he needed to find out about resources for young people in Clarence, he would call around to professional contacts (judges and lawyers), or call a social service agency directly.

Web Survey of Clarence Business Leaders. Clarence business leaders were solicited via email to complete a survey regarding their experiences and beliefs about Clarence youth. The web survey had the following instructions:

The Town of Clarence Youth Department is working with faculty and students at the University of Buffalo to determine the needs of Clarence youth. We are soliciting opinions from a variety of important community groups, and this brief survey is directed to the business community. As a member of the business community you interface with Clarence youth as your consumers/clients, as employees, and as members of your community.

A total of 30 business leaders completed this survey. The following lists each survey questions and summarizes the responses:

Do you hire Clarence youth? (Check one) Yes: 10 (35%) No: 19 (65%)

How do you rate the work performance of Clarence youth? (Check one)

Below expectations: 0

Meet expectations: 7 (78%)

Exceed expectations: 2 (22%)

What can Clarence youth do to make themselves more hireable?

- I work for a bank and we do not hire under the age of 18. Teach the kids work ethics, be on time, customer service, work the hours you are assigned. Don't expect every Friday or Saturday night off when you are working in the service industry. Comments that I hear from local businesses is that the kids don't want to work.
- Get more visible in the community - do more volunteer work. The perception of many is that the Clarence youth do not NEED to work, therefore we hire others.
- Be better educated about workplace values and expectations
- present themselves in a manner commensurate with the positions they seek
- Practice math skills, be careful of dress (girls).
- Be more positive and upbeat when applying.

- Show up to work on time. Be willing to work the hours asked. Do whatever job they're asked to do. Look presentable. Be friendly.
- Receive training on how to prepare for an interview. How to prepare a resume and how to research the company they are going to be interviewing with.
- have a better understanding and knowledge of what a work ethic is and be able to demonstrate commitment and responsibility equitable with their age and maturity level.
- Not appropriate for them to work in our medical office. A number of their peers would be patients here
- Need information on what they are capable of doing.
- it isn't a lack of being 'hirable' it is the lack of work geared to young adults
- I live in the city of Buffalo. However, I do go and do some shopping and visiting in Clarence. I feel the youth should be ready and willing to do work. Be respectful of elderly people. Also, have a positive attitude. Have a can-do attitude.
- Things are good the way they are. The youth who want to work can find jobs.
- At this time our practice is too small to hire. In the future that might be a great idea if the youth looks neat in appearance, is mature and has a good speaking voice.
- be available

What services/agencies are best meeting the needs of Clarence youth today?

- Athletics - Clarence has wonderful soccer and baseball fields and leagues.
- The schools are doing an adequate job of entertaining the Clarence youth outside of school hours.
- those youths that are truly being served are those that are being served by their churches. There really is no 'one' group that serves the Clarence youth.
- I feel the new library is a very nice facility. The churches in the town have many youth group activities as the Eastern Hills Wesleyan Church.
- The town baseball, soccer, football and basketball leagues are doing an excellent job. The schools at every level are busy with after school programs.
- high school/community service
- I'm not really sure what is available
- Don't know
- Not sure any are
- Unknown
- none

What youth needs are not being met or not being met adequately?

- You took away the youth center, the kids don't have a hangout.
- Don't know
- Mental health related issues
- More employment opportunities
- None
- teaching children to be responsible.

- Personally I believe more youth should be involved in their own program. What is it that they would like to achieve. Far too many youth programs are set with little or no initiative on the part of the youth.
- The need to teach self sufficiency and personal responsibility.
- Unknown
- a place for kids to meet that doesn't require being on a team or involved in a sport.
- I don't know.
- I am disappointed that the churches are becoming less relevant in the lives of our youth. Why do we not have a YMCA here?
- Well, since I do not know of any agency or services, maybe a newsletter in the Clarence Chamber could inform business of what is available, things to do

What actions can the community as a whole take to serve our youth more effectively?

- Look at the Eastern Hills Wesleyan church for a successful youth program.
- Don't know
- Fund mental health programs fund professional education for teachers regarding these issues.
- Parents take more time & interest in their children.
- I don't know.
- Holding students accountable and responsible for their actions. Make kids work and contribute to the community and family - that is the way they earn things.
- Provide an environment for growth not just another hang out. Give it a purpose that positively affects the community, so that our youth take pride in what they so often take for granted. We may even see some of our youth our most valuable resource find their way back to our community after they complete college
- This is a tough one because too many parents need to be educated in family values and caring for their children, watching over them and providing life direction for their children - beyond what the schools have the ability to provide. Too many parents in the Town of Clarence look to the schools to act as the parent while the real parents are off doing various activities that preclude a child's participation.
- Unknown
- Make a commitment to kids that, again, are just kids and not athletes, etc..... all kids need to feel good about themselves, not just highly athletic or highly motivated kids
- I feel the community of Clarence must reach out to the youth. I hear stories of many acts of vandalism and disrespect of people's property in Clarence. I feel that much of the trouble from the city is finding it's way into Clarence. Clarence should have a tough-love policy on vandalism. Make the parents pay for the mischief that their kids cause. Some of the kids are out of control. The parents are at fault!! There should be more family counseling programs in Clarence.
- The most important action is listening.

- Getting the word out that there is youth of this community willing to work and help. Give the youth a purpose and get them ready for the real world.
- Make community service more available

4. Developmental Assets

In 2003 The Search Institute reported on its survey of developmental assets in Clarence schools. The Search Institute describes its survey as a "tool for assessing the health and well-being of middle and high school age youth." Three hundred and sixteen 8th graders and 300 11th graders in Clarence schools participated in the survey. Survey participants included 55% female and 45% male students; 91% of the students were White. Table 1 reports the percentage of and averages of students nationally who endorsed the item and Clarence students who endorsed the item; items are displayed from low to high endorsement. Figure 1 displays these data.

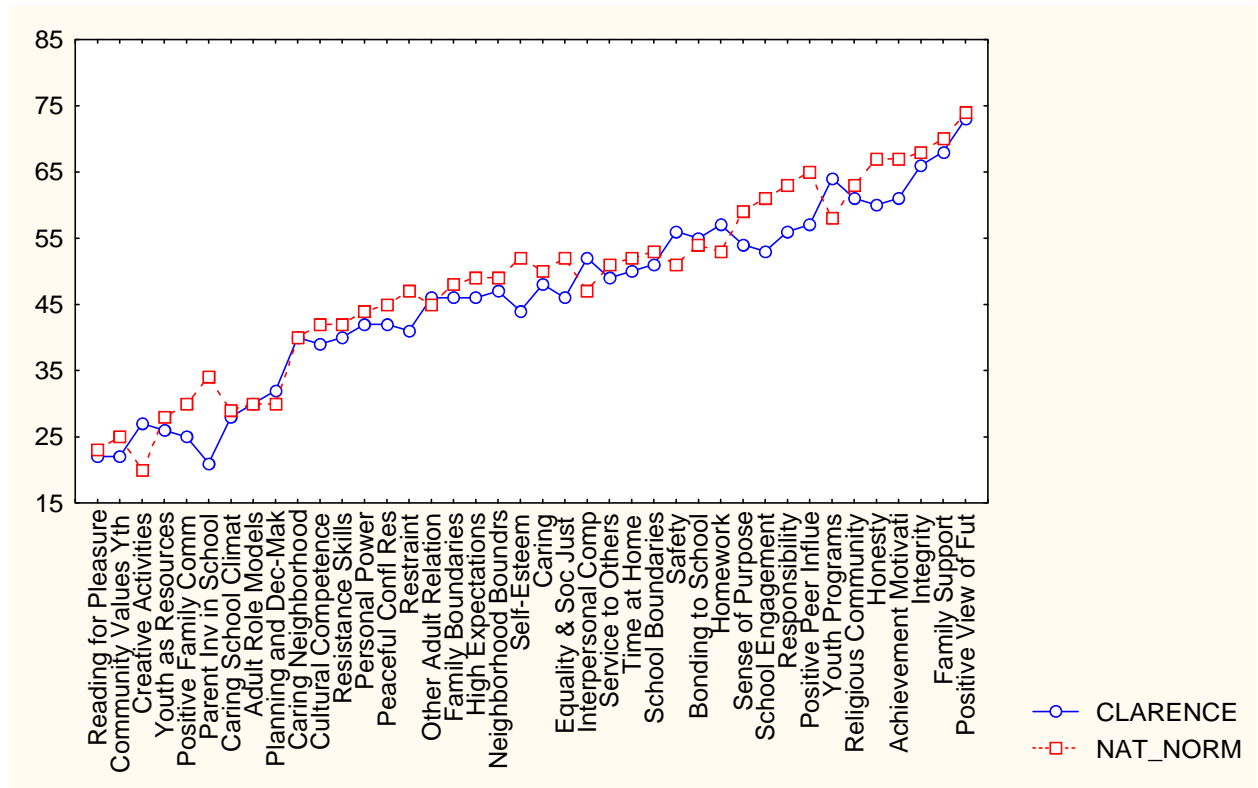
Table 1

Percentage of Developmental Assets Endorsed by Students Nationally
and Clarence Students

<u>Item Content</u>	<u>Nationally %</u>	<u>Clarence %</u>
Reading for Pleasure	23	22
Community Values Youth	25	22
Creative Activities	20	27
Youth as Resources	28	26
Positive Family Communication	30	25
Parent Involvement in Schooling	34	21
Caring School Climate	29	28
Adult Role Models	30	30
Planning and Decision-Making	30	32
Caring Neighborhood	40	40
Cultural Competence	42	39
Resistance Skills	42	40
Personal Power	44	42
Peaceful Conflict Resolution	45	42
Restraint	47	41
Other Adult Relationships	45	46
Family Boundaries	48	46
High Expectations	49	46
Neighborhood Boundaries	49	47
Self-Esteem	52	44
Caring	50	48
Equality and Social Justice	52	46
Interpersonal Competence	47	52
Service to Others	51	49
Time at Home	52	50
School Boundaries	53	51
Safety	51	56
Bonding to School	54	55
Homework	53	57
Sense of Purpose	59	54
School Engagement	61	53
Responsibility	63	56
Positive Peer Influence	65	57
Youth Programs	58	64
Religious Community	63	61
Honesty	67	60
Achievement Motivation	67	61
Integrity	68	66
Family Support	70	68
Positive View of Personal Future	74	73

Figure 1

Graph of Developmental Assets Endorsed by Students Nationally
and by Clarence Students



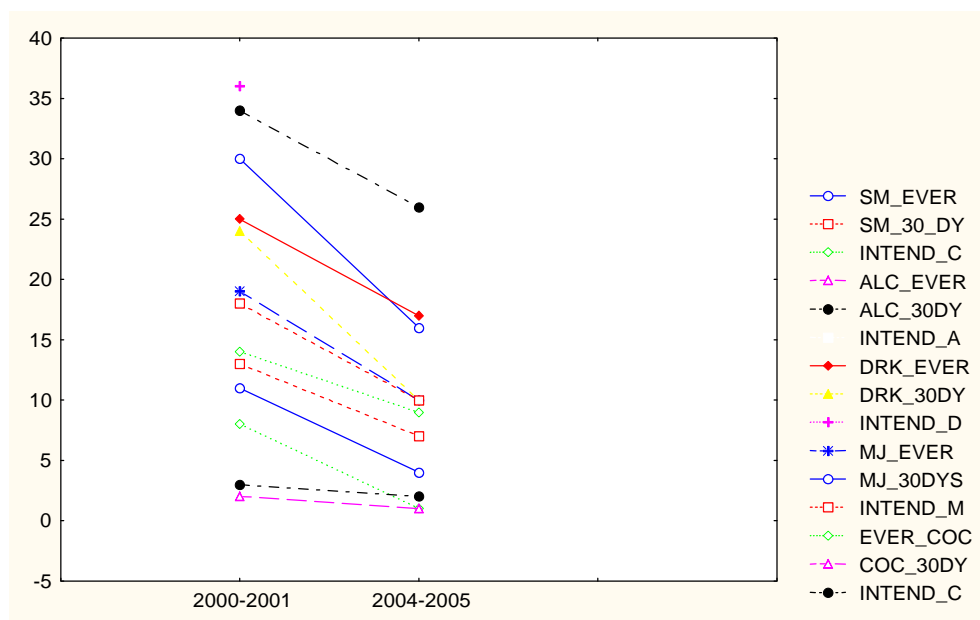
These results indicate that although Clarence youth are responding in similar ways to national averages, for some assets differences exist. For example, Clarence students indicated they spent more time than average on creative activities (spending 3 or more hours per week on such activities as music lessons or the arts) and youth programs (spending 3 or more hours per week in sports or clubs). On the other hand, Clarence youth's endorsements were below average for parental involvement in schooling, restraint (in use of drugs or sexual activity), self-esteem, sense of purpose, and positive peer influences.

5. Drug and Alcohol Use Survey

Another potential indicator of the level of problems in a community's youth is their level of alcohol and drug use. The Department of Health Behavior, Roswell Park Cancer Institute, has conducted surveys of alcohol, tobacco, and drug use among 9th graders in Erie County since 1992. Figure 2 displays results from the 2000-2001 and 2004-2005 survey of 9th graders at Clarence High School. The Executive Summary from the 2004-2005 report concluded that "students' use of drugs, especially alcohol and tobacco, continues to be prevalent." In the latest survey period, in the 30 days prior to the survey 26% of 9th graders had consumed an alcoholic beverage, 10% had gotten drunk, and 4% had used marijuana. Figure 2, however, also shows consistent decreases, from 2000-2001 to 2004-2005 survey periods, for smoking cigarettes, drinking an alcoholic beverage, getting drunk, using marijuana, and using cocaine. These data should be interpreted with caution as students may under-report drug use on such surveys.

Figure 2

Current and Past Drug Use Behaviors, 9th Graders, Clarence High School



Key. SM_EVER refers to the percentage of students who reported ever smoking cigarettes; SM 30 DY to smoking cigarettes in the 30 day period prior to the survey; INTEND C to intent to smoke cigarettes in the future. ALC_EVER refers to the percent of students' who report ever drinking an alcoholic beverage; ALC30DY to drinking an alcoholic beverage in the previous 30 days; INTEND A to intent to drink an alcoholic beverage in the future. DRK_EVER indicates the percent of students who report every getting drunk on alcohol; DRK 30DY to getting drunk in the past 30 days; INTEND D to the intent to get drunk in the future. MJ_EVER refers to the percent of students who had ever smoked marijuana; MJ 30DYS to students who had used marijuana in the past 30 days; INTEND M to use marijuana in the future. Finally, EVER COC refers to the percent of students who had ever used cocaine; COC30DY to the percent who had used cocaine in the past 30 days; and INTEND C to the percent who intended to use cocaine in the future.

Summary and Recommendations

This section provides a list of identified needs and in some instances, possible recommendations for addressing these needs. Some of these identified needs are common across different communities and some specific to the Town of Clarence.

These identified needs include:

1. A method for sharing and disseminating information about Clarence youth services and activities. For example, one Clarence Town Judge reported that residents of Clarence are not aware of available services and suggested sending information home from school as one way to inform the community. Similarly, most students and faith-based leaders expressed a lack of knowledge about current offerings. On the other hand, two-thirds of survey participants, who were primarily parents of Clarence youth, indicated that they were aware of youth services and activities.

2. Increased communication among various agencies and organizations, including social service, recreational, religious, and educational. Some residents described the current situation as a “silo effect” in which these organizations function as isolated entities. The need for increased collaboration and communication among the town, schools, and faith communities was emphasized. As a recent Town of Clarence document put it, clearly there exists a need for greater "communication, collaboration, resource sharing and accountability among participating schools, municipalities and community agencies." One recommendation was to develop a coalition that meets regularly. Related activities could include creating:

- A list of all current youth services offered in the Town;
- A regular newsletter from Clarence Youth Services describing current services and activities available in the Town;
- A website describing current services and activities available from the Youth Department as well as links to services and activities offered by others.

3. Increased opportunities for multicultural activities and experiences for Clarence youth. As both the Search Institute's report about student demographics and the community survey indicated, Clarence youth have very few opportunities to interact with persons from other cultures in schools or other settings. As the United States

increasingly competes in a global economy, more exposure to persons of different cultures and ethnic groups would seem crucial for Clarence youth to develop necessary multicultural competencies and skills. Given the middle and high school students' preference with persons and counselors of college age, one option here might be to contact local universities to determine whether their International Education offices might be able to provide activities and experiences for Clarence youth.

4. An identifiable physical facility for Clarence youth to congregate. As one high school participant in a focus group summed up her feelings: “We just want someplace to go!”

5. Help families receive support services as needed. When families require services, faith leaders indicated that there can be resistance to help-seeking with social services, due in part to the stigma associated with seeking such assistance. An additional barrier to obtaining services lies in their availability; once families agree to seek services, they are frequently faced with a long waiting list.

6. While most would recommend the currently offered Youth services, about half of the community survey respondents indicated dissatisfaction with the variety of offered youth services and programs. For ideas about additional services and programs, students and others offered dozens of ideas listed earlier in this report.

7. Many residents saw a need for such special services as mental health counseling and help with alcohol problems. For example, one of the Clarence Town Judge stated that he has seen a pattern of alcoholism in parents of the youth he works with. High school students also pointed to mental health concerns such as depression, cutting and suicide. One participant observed that when students experience depression,

they feel that they have no one to talk to, and therefore resort to unhealthy coping strategies such as cutting. One possibility would be for the Clarence School District to hire a mental health professional to assist with mental health issues.

8. Educate Clarence youth about problems in the town. Regarding drug use among students, one Clarence student estimated that seventy-five percent of Clarence youth have tried using drugs, and fifty percent use drugs regularly. According to data from recent drug and alcohol surveys in Clarence, this is an over-estimate as less than 40% of 9th graders reported consuming alcohol and less than 25% report using marijuana in the previous 30 days. Better information about the prevalence of drug and alcohol use among Clarence youth may change students' beliefs about how common it is for students to use drugs and alcohol.

9. Transportation to and from youth activities would appear to be a potential problem for some Clarence youth. Many students expressed reservations about using the current youth center because they lacked transportation. No matter where a youth facility is located in spacious Clarence, transportation is likely to be an issue for some.

10. Tailor programs and activities to different groups. Some high school students said they would not use a youth facility if they perceived it as more appropriate for younger children or “kids with problems.” Younger students reported feeling intimidated by guidance counselors, while older students described guidance as a “friendly atmosphere.” A group of sophomore males indicated that female students were more likely to go to counselors. Some students suggested that an Instant Messenger counseling service might find greater acceptance among high school students.

11. The unique demographics of Clarence, characterized by a high percentage of affluent families in which both parents work, presents young people with the potentially risky combination of access to money and a large amount of unsupervised free time. Even a recent The Buffalo News story (October 4, 2006) about a murder in the Town noted that Clarence "has had a rash of burglaries, many tied to local teenagers, plus enough arsons and vandalism for leaders to plead with parents to keep track of their offspring."

One of the recurring themes of the interviews, focus groups, and data collected in this report is the lack of meaning or purpose of many of the Town's young people. This is certainly not unique to the Town of Clarence, although it may be more evident in an affluent area where young people have a considerable amount of leisure time. Students agreed that many of the problems, especially drug-use and vandalism, were attributable to a shortage of *engaging* activities for young people. Similarly, some community leaders indicated that many youth in Clarence lack a feeling of belonging and lack positive relationships with adults. Even when young people have a schedule full with activities, they may lack a special adult or close-knit peer group to provide support and belongingness. Some residents concurred that the relationships built among youth and adults through shared participation in activities and organizations can be more important than the activities themselves. One of the Town Judges suggested that youth activities include "finding something to appeal to alienated kids," build upon adult mentorship programs, and organize community service opportunities for youth who commit minor violations.

Contrast this state of current youth with a recent statement by a veteran reported in the New Yorker magazine about his World War II experience:

"It was the most important period of my life...I was in the war. Although it wasn't long before it faded against my new life--starting a family and getting a job--it marked me. It may sound trite to modern ears, but those really were years when you could get involved in something beyond yourself--something that connected you to your times in ways that no longer seem so natural, or expected."

The times do not lack for local, national, or international challenges for young people to tackle. Which of these might engage Clarence youth?

Appendix A

Listing of General Web Survey Comments (Verbatim) and General Survey Comments from Paper Copies

Web Survey Comments:

1. I think an ice skating arena would be useful. I think a golf program for kids - we are 'discouraged' from taking our kids on a public course. I'd like to see indoor volleyball courts and basketball courts too.
2. Two things I suggest 1. A support group for angry teenage boys to give them alternative ways to cope with anger. 2. I drive my son to the Amherst Youth Center and it was packed. they had local battle of the Bands and it drew a lot of kids. It cost \$2 to get in. Try something like that to get youth interested in the youth center.
3. We need more than 1 football field. To have 7 teams trying to use one facility is pathetic. we have dozens of baseball and soccer fields. Why is it that football does not seem to get the space it needs and deserves.
4. Computer and social services should be left up to families. Counseling could help those who have little family support.
5. Ranking needs of youth and family in order of importance 1 to 10 was not easy. Some things I consider to be about in the middle, but was forced to rank 3, 4, 5, or 6. The survey doesn't allow other way.
6. I would feel more comfortable sending my children to the facility if I knew there would be responsible older adults to supervise. Are you considering paid positions or volunteers to work at the center? Would computer use/internet use be strictly monitored? How secure would the building be? Monitors?
7. Again, we really enjoyed baseball, football and basketball programs in Clarence. All are great. The football field (Sunset Park) can really use more parking space. Thank you!
8. We need additional parking for the Clarence Bulldogs football program. We also need more support from the town with regard to Sunset Park and the football program.
9. I Feel we need better lines of communications in place, when informing the public about youth sports available in the community!
10. Just want to applaud all of the volunteers who manage and coach the existing Baseball and football programs in Clarence. We see a real dedication to teaching the kids about discipline, good sportsmanship foundational techniques that I have no doubt will stick with them the rest of their lives. If you intend to develop future programs, I suggest you look at those who are already heading up Bulldogs football and the TCBA!

11. The kids need a place to go besides the mall or skating rink. A place for clarence residents only with adult supervision.

12. I have been reading the community handouts that my children bring home and am completely disappointed with myself that I haven't taken more advantage of the great activities planned. This survey has opened my eyes to the benefits of the youth organization and I will make an effort to participate.

13. Please improve the parking at Sunset Park as well as the drainage. It needs to be made to be a safe place for youth football and the visitors from all parts of Western New York that participate in youth little league football.

14. We need a bigger parking lot and better sewage for the town football and a track around the field at Sunset Park for the Cheerleader and High School track team would be a huge improvement!!!

15. I would like to see some rec or sports programs that are for fun and don't drain our bank accounts,perhaps a few hours at night or on a Saturday. I also would like to comment on the very dangerous conditions our kids face when attending a game or practice at sunset park. We are forced to park on Wherle and cross that very busy street which is especially terrifying when it is after 5pm and dark. That park needs more parking before someone is killed and the town gets a hefty lawsuit! My kids have been usin that field for 16 years and there has never been any work done to make the parking situation safer. Please think about this liability and potential for great harm or death to 1 or more of your citizens.

16. We need an ice rink in Clarence!!

17. Again, I think swim instruction is important. I have to take my children to Cheektowaga schools for swim class but would much rather stay in Clarence. I do not want my kids to enter middle school and not know how to swim and be singled out by the teacher and other students. Why can't there be weekend swim classes? Why not try it and see what the turn out is. I have talked to several parents who are concerned about this issue. I know from experience that it is harder to learn to swim as you get older and would really like my children to have the opportunity to learn at a young age rather than have a hard time with it later on. Also, it is an important safety issue, there are bodies of water in the area and the more children we teach to swim, hopefully the less likely it will be to have any more unfortunate water related accidents.

18. I would love to see a Boys/Girls club in this community. A place where kids can go and shoot hoops, play games talk and be able to be active.

19. Sunset park needs attention there are several hundred families involved in the football and cheerleadig programs and the parking situation is frightening. there is simply inadequate, safe parking and it is a hindurence to the program and the neighbors I am not

comfortable rating the needs of families in the town because it varies so much from family to family and needs change over the course of a year I fee that all of the needs listed are equally important

20. Leave Tutoring and computers to the schools. Perhaps allow computer access at the Library- thats it. Leave Counseling to the professionals and courts. Sunset needs better parking, someone is going to get killed crossing Wherle to get to football practice or a game. The fields desperately need better drainage to avoid looking like a pond. Bike path is a great resource, but a lot of thought needs to be put into safety (clear a wide area of all trees/brush on both sides, security cameras, etc.)

21. A good community facility should offer all aspects of the above. It is unfair to have to rate any of them over another

22. The football fields need better drainage and a paved parking lot.

23. As a parent of a child in the Bulldog football program, I'd like to see improvements to the parking situation, drainage and the public announcement equipment at Sunset Park.

24. There needs to be better parking for the Clarence Little League football program. It is growing every year yet the town is not doing anyhting to address the parking problem. Someday a family is going to get hurt crossing the busy intrsection at Harris Hill and Wehrle.

25. CLARENCE LITTLE LEAGUE FOOTBALL & CHEERLEADING upgraded and permanent parking areas that do not require players to cross busy streets, and drainage improvements so that our existing parking and fields are not under water minutes after the first raindrop

26. I would like more visibility of the programs and their specifics. It should be more visible to the public via mailings, advertisements, etc...

27. The Center should house a resource library with helpful books and pamphlets on everything from drug and alcohol use to ADHD and OCD to health concerns and parenting issues.

28. We need to make sure the information gets out there to the parents. I lived in Clarence for over five years before I even knew there was a youth center available!

29. We need somewhere for the teenagers to go that is appealing to them.

30. All activities need to be appropriately supervised and strict rules need to be enforced to prevent kids from leaving the premises or acting inappropriately.

31. it's great to have so many activities available to our children. as a parent, we find it so convenient that so many of these diverse activities are located within close driving

distances. although my children did not participate in the summer programs in the park this year...i am planning to have them attend next year! keep up the good work!

32. I would love to see more organized sports (kids)like the kidsplay programs or even drama and possibly a young childrens theatre group. What about skating? I can't find skating lessons anywhere, unless the children play hockey and that is too much commitment for us. (now I have't lived here long, so maybe I am missing something) Otherwise, the cost of the programs is very fair and my children loved the parks and rec program in the summer. We use the library at least once a week and always find what we need there. We also enjoy the family nights at the library as well.

33. Check out Amherst Youth Services and the Family Room. It is a program for children and parents available three days/week offering age appropriate play activities for young children and their peers/family. It is affordable, \$140 per year and visits are endless. Also offer field trips for minimal cost. Much needed in Clarence. They serve about 250 families/year and needs are variable.

34. KIDS PLAY OUTSIDE IN NICE WEATHER. THERE IS A SIGNIFICANT NEED FOR INDOOR ACTIVITY DURING THE COLD AND WINTER MONTHS. AN ICE RINK IS A STRONG NEED IN THIS COMMUNITY. FAMILIES WOULD BE WILLING TO PAY FOR ADMITTANCE, SIMILAR TO THE TOWN POOL. HOT COCOA AND SNACKS COULD ALSO BE SOLD FOR PROFIT. MY FAMILY WOULD FREQUENT AN ICE RINK FROM SEPTEMBER TO APRIL.

35. My children love the summer actvites offered at the parks, the only thing they Clarence needs is a ice skating rink.

36. I think that the character of the individuals running the community center is of UPMOST importance.

37. I think a community WMCA or somenting of the like would be useful where a family could swim/work out, recreate (ie play basketball etc.) I think most of the services above can be found through the school and/or privately. Thank you for this survey.

38. I really did not like your 1 to 10 survey. When we felt that parenting, the arts, before and after school care and social services, counseling needed to be rated higher, but not the highest, we could not vote them a higher number. Bad Survey...

39. Please include programs for toddlers and infants if possible. The Clearfield Comm. Ctr. has interesting programs so young children can exercise, especially since the colder months are upon us. Thank you.

40. I was unable to rank the above with the same number because it cancelled the previous selection

41. The facility would need to attract the "tween" stage and older as well as the younger kids. Based upon my experience here in Clarence, the kids those ages are just looking for things to do especially when their parents work and they are on their own.

42. We need an ice rink.

43. My children are 5 and 9. We are happy with their activities. The middle school and high school kids in the neighborhood need some kind of hang out though. They want to feel some independence and freedom but their parents don't want them walking the streets and hanging out at the Coffee House. I have read the schedule for the kids Center and it seems really fun. I wonder why the older kids I know don't participate? I have never been to the Center. Is it modern and clean with fun decorating that makes kids want to be there? Does the Center need some cool marketing, some kind of "this is the place to be" excitement? To really serve the teens and preteens of the community this Center has to offer irresistible activities. Maybe sports or games or academic challenges or contests, all request dances, local celebrities signing autographs or speaking, self improvement workshops or classes, fashion shows where they are the models, crafting or music classes (maybe taught by kids themselves) or groups who get together to do their craft or make music just for fun without instruction. Maybe an open mike night for music, comedy, poetry reading, dancing- like a talent show. Maybe hockey fans night. That might appeal to kids who play the sport and also to fans of the school and local teams and Sabres fans too. Etc. All of these things need to be promoted as very cool things to do. Events that are not to be missed. They need to happen in the early evening, perhaps 6:00-8:00 or 7:00-10:00. Student representatives from the middle and high schools could be used to hang posters and promote the events at the schools. Maybe even a web site with info and photos of the events. I think parents would like to drop off their children there and let them have supervised yet independent fun. The kids just have to want to go. Also, I think the town needs a cool modern YMCA with an indoor pool. We also need a public indoor ice skating rink. We should definitely have a town outdoor ice skating rink with lights for night skating. It should have a snack bar and tables and music. There should be a town Holiday tree lighting ceremony with caroling. There is nothing so heart warming that gives a town a feeling of togetherness and community in the winter like outdoor evening skating and other activities with refreshments and music. It can be so much fun and make such wonderful memories. These places would offer evening activities that get the kids moving with healthy exercise and fresh air. It would be great to add a place in Clarence, especially in the winter, that would be a popular defined center, a heart, of the town where everyone would like to go.

44. I live near transit and county road and there is very little access to any of the Clarence parks, recreation areas, or the library. I hope a future facility will not be built, since it would likely be inaccessible to me, although my taxes would go up to finance it. Clarence should adopt user fees for its parks and recreation facilities, and base taxes for them on whether one lives within a certain radius of the parks (i.e. the closer one lives, the more they pay). I also find the signs at the parks restricting use to town residents a little silly. How is that even enforced? After all, we have no police protection in Clarence and the 1 or 2 county sheriffs cars that come through the town a week are not going to bother with this.

45. believe education and tutoring should be covered in the schools. not sure about counseling and family support. Also, personally we would not need before or after school care, but it could be important for other families.

46. Being a hockey parent, it is sad to see how many Clarence kids go elsewhere to play hockey. Take a look @ Tonawanda. They have great sports programs @ low cost.

47. I found the ranking of importance for the youth and families tough to answer. I feel all activities/services are very important. What my Family needs are may be very different than the next families. For Me to Say that Morning care or Afternoon care is a least important need is not fair for that single parent who may need that service.

48. Town youth and family services needs to stay in the domain of recreation, referral services. There are plenty of quality, experienced agencies available for the delivery of counseling/social services.

49. ranking the needs of youth & families was very difficult, i feel all items listed are very important, obviously individual family needs are different. thank you for the opportunity for community to voice their options

50. This town has the need for an indoor ice skating facility to house the Clarence Mustangs Youth Hockey Org.Demand for this facility has been proven. There are baseball fields, soccer fields, basketball courts, tennis courts, bike paths, and many other facilities in the town but there is no indoor ice rink. Many Clarence residents travel great distances many times per week to allow their children to participate in the sports of hockey and figure skating as well as recreatin skating.

51. It would be easier for students at HH elementary to get to and from some of the activities if it was safer to walk down the street. Sidewalks would greatly help the situation. It would also increase the attendance of families at the after school activities since there is limited parking and so many families live just down the street.

52. Above - when rating the youth activities - I am not sure what you are talking about. Things like the library, parks, pools ???

53. The middle and high school age youth in Clarence are under served. They are in desperate need of a facility to gather where they are supervised and can engage in constructive activities. A game room (ping pong, pool, foosball, etc.)and a gym would be great! There is a stigma attached to the current Clarence Youth Center,Inc. that prevents many other Clarence Youth from going there. Some feel that under the current model for that Youth Center, the kids are there to be "babysat".

54. The ranking system was difficult because I do believe all of the categories are important.

55. Having a youth center has been a part of this community for over 30 years. Having a safe place for the kids to gather safely together to interact and talk and have a little unrestricted time is vital for their growth. There was a time when the kids in this town could go to a park or the mall or the library or someones's home to hang out. In today's world, there is alot to consider; for example, busy roadways and congested traffic - especially for working parents - when we get home from commuting to and from work, the last thing we need is to drive all over the place, we need a set place for them to meet. Somewhere we can be sure there are no strangers lurking around with intent to bother them. At the mall, they always need money and also, it's not healthy for kids to hang out there. The library has a quiet and studious atmosphere, although they do have a meeting room area for special events. The kids do enjoys games, such as foosball, air hockey and billard games, also computer games. They do enjoy listening to music or watching movies on TV. Primarily, they should have a place that is as familiar and safe as their own homes - like a second home.

56. it needs to be a more community wide program rather than a needs only program. Like the after school programs at the elementary schools with busing provided. That is just my impression...we have not lived here too long. Thanks for doing this!

57. I try to stay in informed as much as possible with the flyers I receive from school.

58. We have only lived here for 4 months, so I answered to the best of my ability. I think that it is very important to offer our kids activities. When they are bored, they tend to get into trouble. Thanks!

59. I truly enjoyed the youth center as a child here in Clarence. I fully support any organization that will give our children something meaningful to do other than wander around town and/or sit in front of video games. Please, let's encourage our kids to be kids!!!

60. It would be nice to serve the needs of children under age 9 as well as the older children. I am sure that parents would not mind staying to participate in programs for younger children.

61. In todays society it is especially important to keep our youth actively involved with physical fitness programs and positive endeavors. A Community facility devoted to a brightly lit and active lifestyle, well staffed with intelligent and knowledgeable adults who actively participate with and supervise the activities would be welcome. It should contain a public pool, ice rink and at least 1 gym along with an adult fitness center and counseling and homework offices. Other communities such as Webster, Skaneateles NY have facilities where every generation of family members may go for recreation as a family unit instead of several smaller and inadequate options

62. I would like to be informed of the findings of this survey and of any developing plans for a community facility.

63. Just a few ideas... There could be some wonderful opportunities for children and families of all ages if a recreational facility was available. •It could be a great place for teenagers to "hang out" in a supervised manner. This could be a place to play games, talk, or listen to music. •In addition, the facility could be a place where asset building activities are possible. It would be neat to provide a place supported by the community where young adults and younger children could get together with friends and/or family to do activities that could help out others who are less fortunate within and beyond our township. •The facility could provide before/afterschool care. Afterschool care could certainly provide for tutoring or homework help. •It would be a nice place for younger children to get together and play afterschool (i.e. doing crafts, etc). •It may provide a nice place for Moms to come together with toddlers during the school day. This could be well equipped with toddler toys and climbing apparatus. •I am not certain of the degree of counseling, parenting, family support needed in our community, but that sounds super for those who need it. •It may be nice to have family nights for the community to come together and get to know their neighbors. I hope that helps. Thank you for taking time to ask the community about such an incredible opportunity.

64. I'm perfectly happy with what I get now, but if it wouldn't affect tax monies significantly (meaning I DON'T want to pay more taxes for the service or activity), I wouldn't mind more arts stuff in the community. I would be willing to pay for it out of pocket, i.e. like a community education class. Also, I would like to see the town get rid of the YOUTH center. I really don't think Clarence needs it and I liked what the previous director, (X), said, that it should be shut down. I waste of taxpayers' money.

65. GET TOGETHER WITH THE CYC BOARD AND WORK THINGS OUT TAKE THE FIRST STEP AND STOP THIS SILLY IMMATURE BEHAVIOR AND CONTROL (X) AND HIS BIG MOUTH WHATEVER GOOD HE COULD DO IS UNDONE BY HIS BIG MOUTH JUST LOOK AT TOME OF HIS REMARKS IN THE BUFFAL NEWS

66. Programs that would keep parents informed of changes, ways to help protect our children, ex: cyber stalking. Alot of parents are unaware of predators in the community and how to protect their children. Assisting parents on talking with their children about concerns of sex, drugs, alcohol, cutting, depression that are so prevelant in our society today. As an ER nurse and sexual assault examiner, I am concerned with what my children are exposed to and to help them understand what is going on and how to avoid the pitfalls of being a teenager

67. The board of education and administrators should be working with parents in regards to family values and disciplinary actions rather than administrating them without the family input and according to their own agendas. The "code of conduct" should be administered for ALL, not just a chosen few, which should and must include teachers and administrators. At this time it DOES NOT,as much as they say it does. There has been incidents involving teachers with NO disciplinary actions taken.

68. Very glad to see a more organized and professional approach to youth services in town. Better oversight while at center will be much appreciated. The previous lack of same kept my kids at home rather than at old center. Some of the old activities like paint ball or less common gross motor activities will be needed to attract many of the middle school boys.

69. stop spending tax payers money for things we do not need and want.

70. This needs to be well supervised, have rules and boundaries for appropriate behavior from kids, and have highly qualified, well trained staff.

71. A YMCA FACILITY WITH AFTER SCHOOL PROGRAMS FOR WORKING PARENTS TO ATTEND. ANY PROGRAMS TARGETED FOR WORKING PARENTS.

72. In my view we have more than enough activities for kids in town. The issue is that busy parents and hectic schedules have torn families apart. We do not need a new facility. I think the town can partner with churches and school to provide space for needed activities if they are necessary.

73. We attend the Clarence Youth Center that is currently offered on Main Street. I am sure since I mentioned that, I will not be eligible for the basket. I really don't care about that. I just don't understand why (X) needs a Program Director to help her out, when there is minimal activities going on. That is a waste of our tax money. Also, to have the activities centered around 12-20 year olds is ridiculous, especially in light of the fact that when most children turn 16, they usually take on a part-time job, plus are busy with after school activities. This program should be centered around children from ages 8 to 16. Since neither of my children's ages range from 12-20, I will not utilize any town-based youth center and will only support the ORIGINAL YOUTH CENTER, who does a wonderful job.

74. INFORMATIVE MINI-SERMINARS (TALKS) 4 PARENTS -VARIETY OF TOPICS

75. family rink to skate and have tournaments

76. On marking the least to most important, I actually wanted a few of my answers to be higher but you could only check one number per question, so it was kind of hard to do.

77. a place where there is no pressure to be the best non competitive environment. groups that encourage kindness, respect and openness without feeling outcast. adults that are there for these kids and they can feel they can go to and voice anything that troubling them. these kids should have a voice in what they enjoy. A place to release pressures someone to listen if they have no one to listen. teaching stress strategies and coping skills.

78. I graduated from Clarence High School in '73. The "Teen Center" was at the Main Park and a great gathering spot for all of us. There were dances on the tennis courts in the summer and (X) sponsored Dances in the winter in the gym at Nativity School. Kids need to be able to socialize in a chaperoned environment in their early teen years. We don't have anything now -- just the High School activities. The community really needs to get behind this

79. As a relatively new parent with my first child in Kindergarten, I have stumbled upon some youth activities/opportunities through the Community Education program. It is frustrating, however, that Williamsville seems to be first in announcing there options, along with offering more programs, times, dates and variety, and I have taken advantage of more of their programs than those offered by Clarence. I think that the concept of a Community Center is a positive step that would meet with much support. Anything that offers our children a structured, yet relaxed environment with options aside from watching T.V. and playing video games and running with the wrong crowd would be excellent. My priorities as a new parent in the district center around: 1-SAFETY 2-Learning 3-Developing sound relationships and making right choices 4-Being a part of community and larger "family" 5-Having positive role models for my children 6-Exposure to unique life experiences If I can be of assistance to offer ideas, or other, I am interested. Time is limited due to a new baby (1 of 3) and full-time work schedule.

80. I think that the schools should take the role in counseling and other social services. We have not been to the Youth Center in 2 years- it was horrible- poor supervision- Employee watching Jerry Springer etc. Would utilize Youth Center better supervised and transportation from elementary school.

81. Many of the services in this survey already exist. The problem is, they cost money. Tutoring, for example, is affordable for most Clarence families; however, parents choose not to spend their money to help their children. The parents feel that it is the responsibility of the school or town to provide these services. Parents do not take responsibility for raising their own children. They demand that others do it for them.

82. a Friday night teen night just for ages 14-18 and not younger children

83. hi - when trying to answer the 1-10 ranking questions, I could not choose the same # for a different section (some of my answers would have been the same #)

84. In general, very pleased with the sports programs and library programming. Not familiar with other services offered, and have not sent 11-year-old to programming at Youth Center because not sure that it is a safe environment. Would like to see more programs that guide youth in enjoying the natural beauty of our area and take advantage of hiking trails, bike trails, etc.

85. If you click on any particular number on this page for a 1-10 rating it clicks off on another line if you try to click the same number

86. Middle school children need a place to get together with their friends and socialize in a supervised atmosphere. It should not be a babysitting service and it should not be a place to drop off troubled youths.

87. as far as education and tutoring, counseling and social services/family support that can be handled more on a family/personal basis or school basis not for that of the community. I feel the community should deal more with entertainment services.

88. We came from the Baltimore area and they offer a wide variety of activities. I feel like it is somewhat limited here...more recreation, arts and sports for kids!

89. My children have never been involved in the youth center, but I know there is a strong need in the community for a center such as this. There are many kids, too many in fact, left on their own. They need a safe, secure place where they can visit for a variety of needs/services. It's a sad fact that there are many families in Clarence, both rich and poor, who neglect their children -- for whatever reasons.

90. We are in desperate need of a community center equipped with a gym, pool and music/theatre room. Our families need to stay together productively and facilities like the aquatic center, YMCA and JCC are too far away. A community center will bring families together and will foster long-term relationships. A good model of a community center is the JCC in Getzville. Seniors and children can participate in a variety of activities in physical fitness, nutrition, music, dance and theatre. The JCC is truly a beacon for all communities and the Town of Clarence should build something similar.

Paper Survey Comments:

Need better advertising of the programs available. Crafts should be free--perhaps "sell advertising space" to local businesses to cover costs of crafts.

Kids need to be kept busy--doesn't have to be an organized team but someplace to shoot hoops, play ping pong, etc. My kids enjoy the summer programs more than anything. Need a bigger facility than new site. Thank you for the programs you provide.

Even if we were in school, we would be notified of Williamsville activities many of which we cannot participate in for free since we are in the Town of Clarence.

Social services/family support.

I would like to see foreign language courses for elementary age students.

Sports such as a girls' ice hockey team. I know that might be realistic, though.

Community center with variety of activity for all ages is a great idea. In my former community we had a YMCA and a "park district" center very close. We have fond memories of activities such as Daddy-Daughter Date Nite and "indoor gym" notes for

parents and preschoolers. Make sure you are able to add on to a center as funds and interests grow! "Build it and they will come..."

Need a program based solely on needs!

I'm 84 years old, but wish everything would have been available long ago. My children are now 60 & 62.

I think parents should have to be involved and give time to any youth activities. Volunteer to all activities.

Since I am a Senior Citizen and have never had children when living in Clarence--I do not know too much about Youth Services. I do know our church is very interested and doing a good job of having activities for the youth of the community--not just for our Church at Zion E. Lutheran --Pastor (X) and Pastor (X) are very interested and will help all youth of our community.

We need more opportunities for youth so that they have a positive experience and hopefully discourage negative behaviors (vandalism, drug addiction, school failure). Parents need education and support about problems with youth in our community. I think parents can be in denial or not aware of the fact (rather than rumors) about real problems. Also they need to know where to turn for help.

Create a Drug Corp. to work in cooperation with home, school, and the police department as the town of Amherst has.

My daughter appeared for a basketball event this summer but no one was there. Phone numbers should be listed with event.

There are many special needs kids in Clarence. Is there a way to get them to socialize with "typical" kids, i.e., crafts, bowling, dances, party etc. My sons are involved in sports and are very social.